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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8738  
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PRIORITY 2078  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0785  
RUEHG/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN PRIORITY 0985  
RUEHK/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY 2763  
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO PRIORITY 1119  
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE PRIORITY 4650  
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY 1823  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUCPDOC/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY 1677  
RUCOWCV/CUSTOMS CARIBBEAN ATTACHE MIAMI FL PRIORITY  
RUEFHLC/HQS DHS WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUMISTA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

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STATE FOR WHA, WHA/CAR, DRL, INR/IAA; USSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD; TREASURY FOR OASIA-JLEVINE; DEPT PASS DEPT OF LABOR (INTERNATIONAL); DEPT PASS USDA FOR FAS; USDOC FOR 4322/ITA/MAC/WH/CARIBBEAN BASIN DIVISION; USDOC FOR 3134/ITA/USFCS/RD/WH; DHS FOR CIS-CARLOS ITURREGUI

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV ELAB ASEC DR  
SUBJECT: DOMINICAN POLITICS III #29: NATIONAL STRIKE ENDS PEACEFULLY; SHOWS PLD VULNERABILITY

REF: SANTO DOMINGO 1626

¶1. (U) This is the 29th cable in our series on Dominican politics in the third year of the administration of President Leonel Fernandez.

(SBU) The 24-hour national strike ended peacefully at 6:00 a.m. this morning. The strike leaders, the Alternative Social Forum (FSA), estimated observance of the strike at 90 percent. While the FSA's figure was exaggerated, commerce and transportation were indeed down significantly, partly due to the fact that an important transportation union, FENATRANO, announced its support for the strike over the weekend. Transportation to the Embassy by personal vehicle for American staff was not impeded; however, Foreign Service Nationals living in the outer suburbs faced some challenges.

(U) Violence was minimal, with the following exceptions: A man was killed on July 8 in a confrontation with the security services in Navarete, Santiago Province (the details are sketchy and the police are investigating); and, three individuals were severely burned in Cienfuegos, Santiago Province, when, it appears, one of the Molotov cocktail-style bombs that they were fabricating exploded prematurely. There have been a number of arrests (50, according to FSA) of strike leaders for alleged illegal activity.

(U) FSA, a coalition of social organizations and labor groups, organized the strike to protest social conditions and the poor delivery of government services. Among the very broad demands made by FSA were the lowering and freezing of prices of basic foodstuffs, raising of salaries, reduction of fuel taxes, a one-year moratorium on squatter evictions, and issuing land titles to residents of poor neighborhoods. The Embassy is not aware of any negotiations having been held

between the Government and FSA prior to and during the strike.

(SBU) The Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD), the country's largest opposition party, lent its political support to the FSA's strike. The ruling Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) then claimed, probably correctly, that the PRD helped organize the strike. The spin by PLD officials was that the work stoppage had more to do with politics than poor social conditions.

(SBU) COMMENT: The FSA's demands were so broad and far-reaching that negotiations with the government were practically impossible. It is more likely that the FSA's objective was to send a message to the government, and that goal was achieved by the strike's significant reduction in commerce and transportation. The country's solid GDP growth figures, often touted by the government, are not being felt in the barrios. As his administration struggles to provide public services in a constrained fiscal environment, President Fernandez must know that while he remains the front-runner in the May 2008 presidential election, victory over the PRD will be no cakewalk.

-- Drafted by Peter Hemsch

¶2. (U) This report and extensive other material can be consulted on our SIPRNET site,  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo/>  
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